

Trump says he will allow violent vigilantism to end crime. Believe him.

In his own words

“One rough hour — and I mean real rough. The word will get out, and it will end immediately.” Addressing what he has described as a plague of unchecked property crime in American cities, Mr. Trump, at a rally in Erie, Pa., suggested a brief burst of police violence as a corrective.

Why you should believe him

Mr. Trump has a long history of encouraging violence against those he accuses of crimes, a category that stretches from thieves to legal protesters, public officials,

and journalists. He told people at his rallies to “knock the crap out of” protesters. Former officials say that Mr. Trump wanted the military to shoot Black Lives Matter protesters. On January 6, 2021, he told his supporters to “fight like hell” to prevent Congress from confirming Mr. Biden’s victory. And during the current campaign, he has repeatedly returned to the idea that the government should kill shoplifters. Last October, he called it a “simple” solution to retail theft. Mr. Trump’s campaign insisted

that his call for a “rough hour” shouldn’t be taken literally or seriously. But there’s good reason to: The violent language frequently deployed by Mr. Trump, and by his acolytes, is contributing to an environment in which acts of political violence, especially by right-wing extremists, are increasingly common.

A mob of supporters of then-US president Donald Trump climb through a window they broke as they storm the US Capitol Building in Washington on January 6, 2021. LEAH MILLIS/REUTERS



Trump says he will order military to strike foreign civilian targets if US is attacked. Believe him.



Former US president Donald Trump speaks at a hangar rally at Al Asad Airbase in Iraq on December 26, 2018, where he defended his decision to withdraw US forces from Syria. AP

In his own words

“If I were the president, I would inform the threatening country, in this case, Iran, that if you do anything to harm this person, we are going to blow your largest cities, and the country itself, to smithereens.”

At an event in North Carolina in September, Mr. Trump said the Biden administration has not done enough to protect him from assassination attempts, including a possible Iranian plot.

Why you should believe him

A president has broad powers to authorize military action against a foreign country, and the United States has often responded to acts of state-sponsored terrorism with military force. If Iran committed an act of terrorism or tried to harm an American official, Mr. Trump would have the authority to launch a strike. In similar situations, presidents have retaliated against military and intelligence targets. What Mr. Trump is describing — blowing up cities — would go far beyond

those boundaries. During the closing days of Mr. Trump’s presidency, Gen. Mark Milley, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reportedly became so concerned about the possibility of an illegal, unauthorized, or accidental military strike that he instructed the Joint Chiefs to ensure that no unlawful orders were carried out and that no actions were taken without calling him first. When John Kelly was serving as Mr. Trump’s secretary of homeland security and James Mattis was serving as secretary of defense, The Associated Press reported that the two men made a private agreement not to leave the country at the same time, so that one of them would be on hand to restrain the president. Last month, more than 700 former and current national security officials released a letter describing Mr. Trump as unfit for the presidency because he is vengeful and impulsive. If Mr. Trump’s own top advisers did not trust him to use force with prudence and restraint, can the American public?

Trump says he will punish blue states by withholding disaster relief. Believe him.

In his own words

“We’re going to take care of our farmers. We’re going to take care of your water situation. And we’ll force it down his throat. And we’ll say: Gavin, if you don’t do it, we’re not giving you any of that fire money that we sent you all the time for all the forest fires that you have.”

At a rally in the Coachella Valley in October, Mr. Trump suggested that he would withhold emergency aid for California after wildfires unless the state’s Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom, complied with his demands for changes in unrelated agricultural policies.

Why you should believe him

As president, Mr. Trump repeatedly sought to prevent the distribution of emergency aid to places run by Democrats. His administration delayed more than \$20 billion in emergency aid for Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria struck the island in 2017, but it expedited aid for the Florida Panhandle af-

ter Hurricane Michael struck the following year. “They love me in the Panhandle,” Mr. Trump said, according to the autobiography of Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida. “I must have won 90 percent of the vote out there. Huge crowds. What do they need?” After wildfires swept California in 2018, the president initially declined to approve emergency aid. Mark Harvey, a senior official on his National Security Council, told Politico that the funding was approved only after aides presented Mr. Trump with data showing that there were more Trump supporters in Orange County, Calif., than in the entire state of Iowa. During the Covid pandemic, Mr. Trump urged Congress to require blue states to adopt his policy priorities, including the elimination of sanctuary cities and payroll taxation, to be eligible to receive emergency aid. The president of the United States is supposed to act in the interests of all Americans. That is a responsibility Mr. Trump has never taken seriously.



Then-US president Donald Trump (c) chats with a survivor of Hurricane Michael at a distribution center in Lynn Haven in the red state of Florida on October 15, 2018. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

“I think the bigger problem are the people from within. We have some very bad people. We have some sick people, radical left lunatics. And I think they’re the — and it should be very easily handled by, if necessary, by National Guard, or if really necessary, by the military, because they can’t let that happen.” — Donald Trump



Then-US president Donald Trump (c) among other leaders at the NATO summit in the UK in 2019. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

Trump says he will abandon US allies. Believe him.

In his own words

“No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You got to pay. You got to pay your bills.” At a rally in South Carolina in February, Mr. Trump said “one of the presidents of a big country” asked him whether the United States would still defend that country if it was invaded by Russia, even if it doesn’t “pay”.

Why you should believe him

As president, Mr. Trump instructed aides in 2018 to prepare to withdraw the United States from NATO, though he was dissuaded

from following through, in part by promises from European nations to increase military spending. That spending has increased: Two-thirds of NATO’s 32 members are now meeting the pact’s defense spending guidelines. But Mr. Trump remains a skeptic. While NATO was created in 1949 to bind Western democracies together and as a counterweight to the power of the Soviet Union and its allies, Mr. Trump shows no appreciation for either vital national interest. He has said that he does not see the point of the alliance or the purpose in

expending American resources to protect other nations. Last year, Congress passed a law that expressly prohibits the president from withdrawing the United States from NATO without lawmakers’ authorization. But Mr. Trump could act to undermine the alliance even without withdrawing formally, for example, by reducing the number of troops dedicated to NATO, an approach that some experts describe as quiet quitting.

The full article first appeared on The New York Times.